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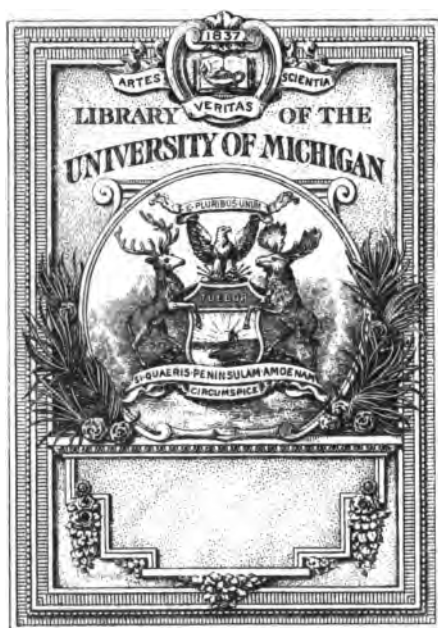
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**STUDIES IN RHYME AND RHYTHM**

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

PLAYS FROM ENGLISH HISTORY.

THE SHADOW OF THE RAGGEDSTONE.

TALES IN THE SPEECH HOUSE.

THE HISTORY OF A DOUBLE.

# STUDIES IN RHYME AND RHYTHM

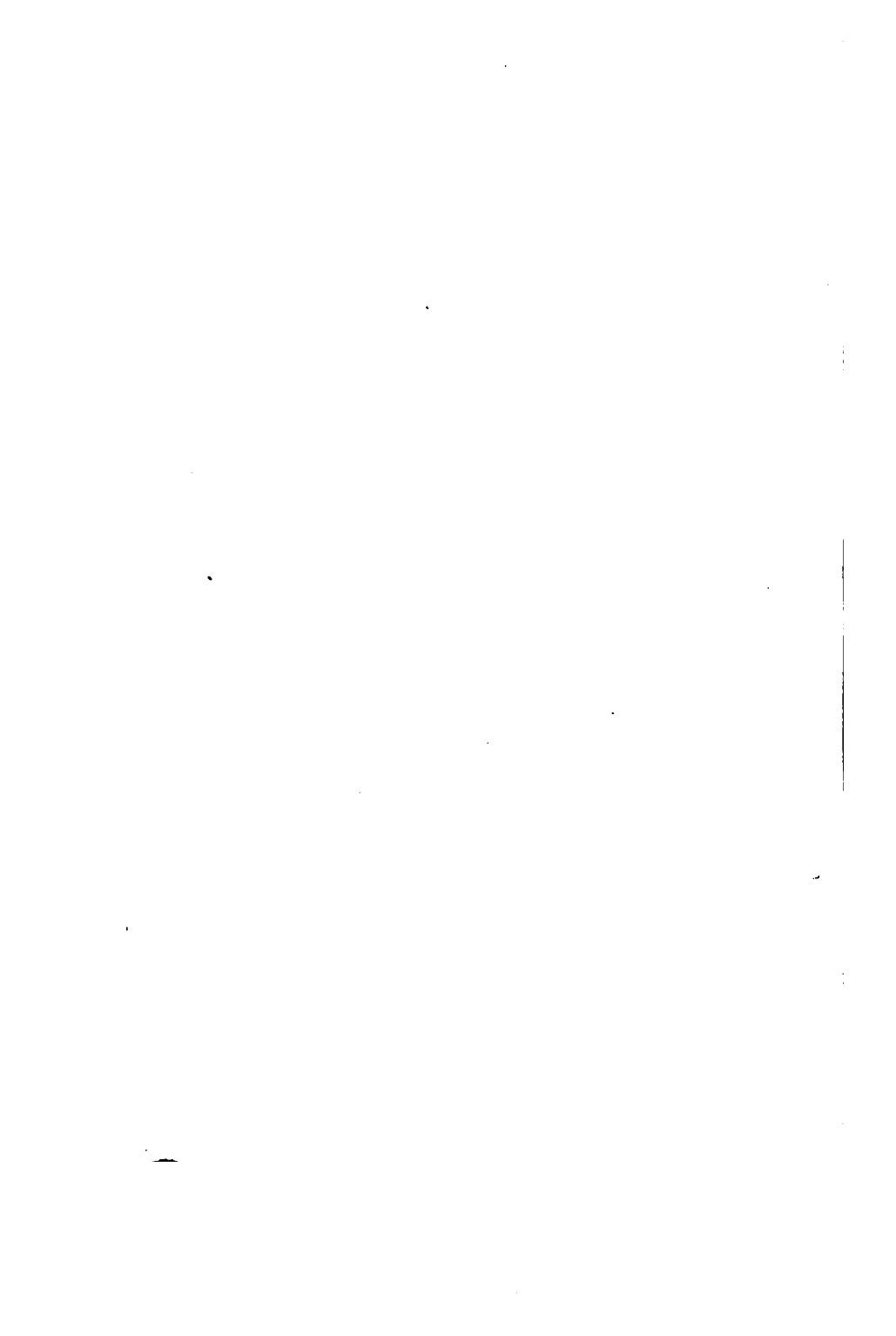
BY

CHARLES F. GRINDROD

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1905



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TO MY FRIEND, SIR EDWARD ELGAR

*The world hath watched for one to rise and wake  
Our English harp—to strike its rusty strings  
From their long sleep—one strong enough to break  
The spell that bound its lost imaginings.  
And thou hast risen as a lark that flings  
The Earth's dust from its plumes—that, Heaven-stirred,  
                  flies  
Higher and higher until, full-toned, it sings  
In the domed temple pillared by the skies.*

*We tremble with thy Dream's last death-drawn notes,  
Or with lost Judas join in wild appeal,  
Yet fathom not the passion that we feel.  
It is enough our fancy with thee floats.  
It is enough to follow thy rapt soul  
Through those dim realms where sounds immortal roll.*



## The Burial of Montfort

**D**ARK and red as a winter sun  
The field of slaughter lies :  
The wind makes moan as it doth run  
Across the frightened skies.  
Like a lost soul distraught it flies :  
It wanders wild, but finds no rest,  
For red with blood is the brown earth's breast,  
And the air is filled with dying cries,  
And all the world's unblest.

Down the mirk sky the sun doth sink  
In angry mood, blood red :  
It stains the field and river-brink,  
And stirs the sickly dead.  
It gleams on many a knightly head,  
And glints on cap of common groom :  
It jests with death, and laughs at doom,  
And lights the wandering soul late-spel,  
That gropes in unknown gloom.



## The Burial of Montfort

DARK and red as a winter sun  
The field of slaughter lies:  
The wind makes moan as it doth run  
Across the frightened skies.

### ERRATUM

Page 102, line 12. For 'looks' read  
'locks.'

Down the mirk sky the sun  
In angry mood, blood red  
It stains the field and river-b  
And stirs the sickly dead.  
It gleams on many a knigh  
And glints on cap of common  
It jests with death, and laugh  
And lights the wandering s  
That gropes in unknown gloo

's breast,  
ies,

## Beyond

O THAT my voice could reach thee! Thou, whose  
soul

Wanders in some far corner of blue space  
Between the flashing stars—some glorious place  
Bright with the blaze of mightier suns that roll  
Beyond our dazzled sight. Or is thy goal  
Some cloud-cave darker than Earth's deepest cell,  
Where through Time's eons never ray yet stole  
To melt the blackness? Whisper thou and tell  
Thy spirit's abiding, thy soul's joy or pain.  
Reach through the mist, and strive to break Death's  
spell.

Palace or prison, I would with thee dwell.  
Let but the gracious gods cast free our chain,  
Let but love join our severed souls again,  
And I will seek no more from Heaven or Hell.

## The Ninth Plague

THE dawn-time is come, but no dawn-beams up the  
 eastern sand-hills creep,  
 As one by one the sleepers rouse heavily from their  
 sleep,  
 And a whisper, low with terror, runs round the waking  
 hive—  
 “Have we slumbered the day through like drunkards,  
 or are we buried alive?”  
 Then the hearts of the boldest falter as the fluttering  
 heart of a dove,  
 As men feel for the faces they see not, the forms they  
 fear for and love.  
 Like a broken harp lies the Earth, and from its strings  
 not a sound  
 Stirs the deathly dusk that wraps it like a winding-  
 sheet around,  
 While, swathed with the blackness of Hell, hides the  
 great red eye of the sun,  
 Like the blinded doom that awaits the felon whose  
 race is run.  
 The pulse of the World beats faintly, and fails the  
 desire of Life,  
 And Nature, like one that is spent, bends down her  
 head to the strife;

Till at last the voice of the Pharaoh from the living  
darkness cries—

“A man cannot strive with a Spirit—a man that only  
dies.

O strong, stern God of the Hebrews, let us live, let  
us breathe—lift this woe

From our souls, and I swear by Thy greatness to let  
Thy people go!”

## To My Mother

I SHOULD not weep for thee, they say, and tell,  
What I, too, trust, that thou dost dreamless sleep  
An hour till Dawn—no more—and that all's well.  
To which I answer—"Did not Jesus weep  
At Lazarus' grave?" And so I nearer creep  
To that sad place which is both shrine and cell,  
Where I may worship and my vigil keep,  
And whispers of thee fall as from a shell.

Within, without—the place is warm with thee.  
The paths yet show thy prints, the flowers still bloom  
Thy hand hath touched—I hear, and feel, and see  
Thy presence in all—yea, even the dread tomb  
Doth yield its bars. I count its fetters free  
Since Death but holds the door, Love hath the key!

## The Diver's Tale

It was the sweetest place e'er seen,  
 A garden of the deep.  
 The sea was of the purest green,  
 And blue the rocky reef.  
 Bright tangle lined the cave, and sheen  
 Of golden sand, where might have been  
 A sea-maid lain asleep.

Into the cave a passage led,  
 Whose wondrous painted walls  
 With living hues were richly spread;  
 And many hollowed halls,  
 Beyond the first cave, green and red,  
 Glowed with a glimmering light soft shed  
 Where the cliff breaks and falls.

But well I weet that fairest things  
 Are sometimes foul within;  
 And beauteous creatures oft have stings,  
 And purest looks hide sin;  
 Yea, and the brightest sunrise brings  
 The storm-winds, and false fiends wear wings  
 White as true angels win.

I am not two-score autumns old,  
 And yet my hair is grey,  
 Because twice twenty years were rolled  
 Into one summer's day;  
 And that man's blood were wondrous bold  
 That should not turn the salt sea cold  
 After such hellish play.

For close beside the rock's deep rent,  
 Just seaward of the cave,  
 I saw what maddish men invent  
 Who in their slumber rave;  
 The grimpest thing that hell e'er sent  
 When labouring with a black intent,  
 Or belched by unblest grave.

It half lay in a tangled crack,  
 And half its body's bloat  
 Swelled forth: its belly, head, and back  
 Were big as my small boat.  
 Its hue was grey, or yellowy black—  
 It was the ugliest thing, alack!  
 That e'er did swim or float.

Eight limbs it had—I counted five,  
 And three kept fast its place.  
 Once in their clutch no flesh alive  
 Could free their foul embrace.  
 The stoutest man that aye did thrive  
 If caught by them—his soul God shrive!  
 His body were past grace.

Its livid body and its limbs  
 Stretched out full fathoms three,  
 And from beneath their horny rims  
 Its wicked eyes watched me.  
 Alack ! there is no thing that swims  
 Whose horror so the spirit dims  
 In all the grisly sea.

It watched me with its cruel eye,  
 That shot no gleam of haste.  
 There was full time to have me die,  
 And my strange blood to taste.  
 It knew my tortured bones would lie  
 Sand-deep—that I could never fly  
 From that unhallowed waste.

I have the thought that in my shock  
 My mind made out a scheme:—  
 The tangle floating round the rock  
 A monstrous web did seem,  
 And I the fly within its lock,  
 And this huge spider crouched to mock  
 The horror of my dream.

I'd left the sweetest baby girl  
 At home, and my true wife,  
 Yet thought I not in that dread swirl  
 Of any joy in life.  
 I only saw that grisly churl,  
 And watched its cruel arms uncurl,  
 And waited for the strife.

And as I stared the monster stirred,  
 And one foul arm it wound  
 About my neck, and one did gird  
 My body tightly round;  
 And through the wash I watched a third  
 Creep like a shadow grey and blurred,  
 And felt my legs fast bound.

Each of its leprous limbs, I wist,  
 With cups was studded thick:  
 They were as big as my right fist,  
 And had this hellish trick—  
 The thing they held might turn and twist,  
 And strain and strive as it should list,  
 Until its soul were sick.

Half hidden in its filthy maw,  
 Was sheathed a bird-like beak:  
 'Twas sharp and pointed as a claw  
 Of crab, and tough as teak.  
 'Tis ill to flout at Nature's law,  
 Yet seem such loathly shapes a flaw,  
 A foul and fearsome freak.

Its cursèd suckers could not press  
 The blood-drops from my skin,  
 Nor could its beak through my stout dress  
 An easy entrance win.  
 God and His Saints I praise and bless  
 That I was not in nakedness,  
 Or I had died in sin!

It strained me like a straining-winch,  
 Tighter and tighter still.  
 I could not stir a step, nor flinch,  
 Nor had I got the will.  
 And yet it drew me ne'er an inch :  
 It seemed its way to keep its clinch  
 Till time and sea should kill.

My comrades caused me most affright,  
 Lest they should heave the rope,  
 For while it kept its rock no might  
 Could with this fiend-fish cope.  
 That it would weary in its spite,  
 And loose from me its trannels tight,  
 'Twas all I had to hope.

My hope was like a star, I trow,  
 When it shines wan and weak,  
 No brighter than when Earth's dark brow  
 Is touched by Dawn's first streak ;  
 But in a while the warm beams flow,  
 And gloom is gone, and with the glow  
 Song and light laughter break.

I know not if such creatures share  
 Our motions of surprise,  
 If wonder that I still stood there  
 Seemed mystic to its eyes ;  
 But, sooth, it did a thing most rare—  
 It loosed it from its rocky lair,  
 And gathered to its prize.

These monsters foul of force are reft  
When they their cables slip,  
And like a flash of frenzy swept  
The thought of friends and ship.  
I thank the Lord, I'd one arm left,  
And, though 'twas numbed, with sudden heft  
Did I the signal grip.

The willing lads they worked right well,  
For all the weight so sore.  
They drew us up with scarce a spell  
To sunny sky and shore.  
Then laughed I at that thing of hell  
Till on the slimy deck I fell,  
And minded nothing more.

## Chance

SEED of a soul along the ages blown,

Far must thou travel on the wings of night  
Before thou findest freedom to be sown.

The desert's breath shall choke thee with its blight,  
And threatening fowls shall follow in thy flight;  
And when at length a resting thou hast found

Where the soft soil yields to the prompting rain,  
Fierce are the foes will fret thee underground,  
And rocks and thorns will thickly gird thee round.

So, if thou buddest at all, 'twill be with pain,

With worm-worn leaves, and blossoms seared with  
stain.

So must thou battle in thy narrow bound

Against the heavy years, and oft in vain,  
While the gods watch thee from their peace profound.

## The Nightingale

I HAVE no thought, sweet Nightingale,  
 When first I listen to thy thrilling song  
 Rising and mingling with the moonbeams pale,  
 Than to be one of the enchanted throng,  
 Trees, flowers, and stars, and countless unguessed things,  
 That bend to thee in rapture all night long ;  
 But by and by my fancy stirs its wings,  
 And flies with me along the silvered way  
 Of dreams long faded in forgetful day :  
 Then from the misty marge of Time's abyss  
 Old pleasures smile like phantoms of dead play,  
 Old sorrows sob and sigh their shadowy pain,  
 And old loves live again,  
 Embodiments as e'er to sense seemed plain  
 With look, and voice, and kiss.  
 And presently, when thy long, liquid notes—  
 To which, as on a thread of moonlight, floats  
 The sense of the whole heart—  
 Have summoned me again to thy sweet will,  
 I know not, magic bird,  
 And I am wondering still,  
 If I to grief or gladness by thy art  
 Have most been stirred.

## A Dream

LAST night, lost love, in blessed sleep I dreamed  
That time was kind, and you were by my side  
As in the golden days before you died;  
And as you talked with me—lo, all things seemed  
As they had once been, for your bright eyes beamed  
Never more brightly when I called you bride,  
And your warm hand that lay in mine defied  
Death's cold report, or else its lie redeemed.  
Yet, as we walked together, my heart's yoke  
Fell back on me—something I could not name  
Stirred my old wound, and, questioning, I spoke  
Of our eternal troth—yea, the doubt came  
If on your soul's pure altar burned love's flame;  
And with your kiss for answer I awoke.

## Cradle Song

SLEEP, gentle child !  
 I would not have thee wake  
 For all the dreams of Earth  
 That tempt thee to forsake  
     Thy slumbers mild.  
 Sleep, little child,  
 Nor thy pure visions break !  
 Thy thoughts are angels' themes.  
 The world hath nothing worth  
     Thy cloudless dreams.

Thy dreams, sweet babe, are still  
     Smiles out of Heaven.  
 Half dwellest thou above,  
 Not yet from guardian Love  
     To Ocean driven.  
 Dream on, while still thy sleep  
 The bright-winged angels keep !  
 Soon, when thy young feet rove,  
 A fainter light will fill  
 Thy dreams, and fewer prove  
     The glimpses given.

Dream, gentle one, and sleep!

And, while 'tis thine,  
Let thy untroubled dreams  
Be lighted by that smile  
Our fancy deems divine.

Dream on, and sleep!  
In but a little while  
The world will cloud thy beams,  
And show thee how to weep  
As Earth beseems.

Sleep on, in thy pure shrine  
Of dreams divine!  
Wake not till dawn, nor fret  
Thy thoughts with that strange ground  
Thy tender feet must take.  
Thou need'st not fear to miss  
The rough world's goal.  
Too soon thou shalt awake!  
Too soon forget  
Those guardian dreams of bliss  
That cradle thy young soul  
From sin around!  
Too soon will Earth be found!  
Too soon the vision break,  
And Innocence forsake  
Her angel kiss!

## Moonlight

I KNOW not if your eyes are black or blue ;  
Nor what your hair is, whether dark or gold ;  
Nor what your shape ; scarce if you're young or old ;  
I know not, even, if you're false or true—  
I only know I love you—that's my clue,  
My slender thread of silk, yet steel as well,  
Which leads me to that bower none else can find,  
Where you, my fair religion, sit enshrined.  
And though I enter with veiled sense, your spell  
I feel, and hear your spirit's vesper-bell.  
'Tis Love's pale moonlight, wherein phantoms seem  
To witch us with the solid shapes we trust.  
I would not have it different, lest my dream  
Should melt, and my soul's worship turn to dust.

## Vengeance

I HATED him for ten long years,  
And each year more I hated.  
The time had gone for silly tears,  
And what befell was fated.

I loathed him wroth, I loathed him mild,  
I loathed him saint or devil;  
But most I loathed him when he smiled,  
For then he looked most evil.

We women bear our burden long,  
A little more than's measured.  
Our love is deep, our hate is strong  
When every slight is treasured.

We bear it long, and then we break,  
Or else the wrong we leaven.  
We suffer hell for true love's sake,  
For false we stifle heaven.

Down the dark woods I went one day:  
I was no dull beginner.  
I gathered weeds enough to lay  
The soul of stoutest sinner.

I knew the rank, I knew the sweet:  
Oft had I plucked for healing.  
For many a babe my heart had beat  
With nigh a mother's feeling.

I made his supper of the best :  
I never mixed a better.  
Low laughed I when the stuff he blessed,  
And said he was my debtor.

He was so hungered that he ate  
As dogs eat, never blinking ;  
And then he shuddered at his plate,  
And sudden fell to drinking.

And then he cried—"What ails it, Jane?  
This mess is bitter tasting.  
It burns my belly with sharp pain,  
My blood feels dry and wasting!"

He saw the hatred in my eye,  
He saw my triumph bubbling :  
He knew that he had got to die,  
To pay for ten years' troubling.

Yet half he clenched his cruel hand,  
And half he rose, and mumbled ;  
And once he forced himself to stand  
A moment ere he stumbled.

But still I smiled, for well I wist .  
That I had slain my sorrow,  
That cursèd speech and cruel fist  
Would not be mine to-morrow.

## The Siren

THERE'S none like you, dear—never lips that can  
Whisper such sweets as yours, nor yield such kisses ;  
No other eyes so eloquent of blisses ;  
No hand that can a life so lightly span ;  
Nor laughing wit that softly leads a man  
So far and so forgetfully astray  
That all his former path he blindly misses,  
Yet misses not, not caring where it lay.  
In truth, my dear, you have a witching way  
That sets the best of us at strife with duty,  
And almost fools us, for at least a day,  
To think that there's a soul behind your beauty,  
For none can call on God so well as you,  
When you are false, to witness that you're true.

## Night-Song

THROUGH the black night I look and listen:

For thee, O Ellaline.

I see one pale flame glide and glisten

In the gloom, Ellaline.

The wind is warm, and fitful blowing,

Storm-stirred, O Ellaline.

My nameless fear to frenzy growing

Blinds my blood, Ellaline.

Above a broken bough is creaking

Wild woe, O Ellaline ;

Like a death-song, or spent soul seeking

Its lost hope, Ellaline.

The black-winged bats around are flying,

Weird mutes, O Ellaline !

Dumb shades that seem to warn of dying

The life left, Ellaline !

No moon the dream-draped hills is lighting,

Dread dreams, O Ellaline.

Death's brooding threat all things is frightening,

Save the dead, Ellaline.

With the racked world my soul is quaking,  
Doubt-dazed, O Ellaline.  
It is the mood before the making  
Of madness, Ellaline.

Now the sky shakes with shock of thunder,  
Flames flash, O Ellaline !  
I call ! O hear, and break asunder  
Thy bound soul, Ellaline !

Awake ! 'Tis time thou wert arisen  
From sleep, O Ellaline !  
Awake ! My love shall break thy prison,  
Or share it, Ellaline !

## 'ANA'TKH

SIR, you've prosed very wisely, preached most well,  
 And I have listened with a dog's despite  
 That hasn't a bark left in him, nor a bite.  
 You've told me that I'm bent on death and hell,  
 A fool to my own soul, a shameful knell  
 To warn my fellows; and no doubt you're right;  
 Right, too, yet more, that there's a strange-wrought  
 spell  
 Works blood and brain—aye, by our Maker's name,  
 My father's blood bears something of the blame!  
 But let that pass—what good were it to tell?  
 Now, Sir, I've heard your sermon—all the same  
 My belly burns as if it were alight.  
 Give me a drink, Sir, just to still the flame,  
 Just to keep down the devils that in me fight.

## A Wayside Tragedy

'Twas in a pretty lane one May,  
 All sweet with sun and showers,  
 That a dead man like a dead log lay,  
 Face down among the flowers.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry,  
 To the Soul that's crossed the weird, wan ferry!

They turned him on his back to note  
 If still his heart were beating,  
 And loosed the red rag round his throat,  
 While some devil kept repeating—  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry!  
 Hinder not souls from the weird, wan ferry!

His wife stood by him on the green,  
 As free as stone of passion:  
 She was the calmest wife yet seen  
 In such a fearsome fashion.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry,  
 To the dead man's wife as brown as sherry!

A little bird sang on a tree,  
 And a beetle round was whirring;

But the dead man's wife was like the sea  
 When not a breath is stirring.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry,  
 To the wife that's neither sad nor merry !

The dead man's face was deadly blue,  
 And he was warm and sweating,  
 For all his wife was cold as dew,  
 With ne'er a thought of fretting.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry,  
 To the face that's like a blue, blue berry !

One dead hand grasped a rusty knife,  
 The other clutched some dinner :  
 His filthy mouth gaped at his wife,  
 As though a spell were in her.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry,  
 To the wife that's neither mad nor merry !

The dead man's mouth was open wide,  
 Yet not a word he uttered.  
 The dead man's wife, her tongue seemed tied,  
 Save that she sometimes muttered.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry,  
 To the wife that stood at the wan, weird ferry !

And when at last she broke the spell,  
 Her speech—'twere best not given :  
 Enough to say that more of hell  
 It savoured than of heaven.  
 Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry !  
 Cold comfort's in the red Yew-berry !

The dirge she sang choked sun and air,  
 And chilled the bright Spring flowers.  
 It was foul breath to blast things fair,  
 Rank juice that sweet things sours.  
     Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry !  
     A rough wind blows across the ferry !

With groping hands the clouds of fate  
 I blindly felt, and wondered  
 If Hell had made these two to mate,  
 Or only Earth had blundered ?  
     Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry !  
     'Twixt sin and sorrow what soul's merry ?

Yet long ago—the gossips said—  
 They were a pair as pretty  
 As ever in a church were wed,  
 And God knows 'twas a pity.  
     Sing derry-down, derry-down, derry !  
     God send us light to cross the ferry !

## The Three for David

WE spake no word, but silent, spear in hand,  
Swore to our hearts that we would die or bring  
The gift he longed for to our lord the King.  
Below us, in a hollow of the land,  
Lay a fierce host, and we were but a band  
Of three—yea, by the Lord our Strength, but three,  
Yet they fled from us like the desert sand,  
Or as birds scatter from a hawk and flee.  
So we three won us to the sacred well,  
And filled our bottles, and won back, and crept  
Wounded to our lord; and none had need to tell  
Our tale—nay, when he came our gift to see,  
And saw our wounds—lo, a strange thing befell,  
For like a child David our great King wept.

## Memories

A DOZEN years ago  
 In this old wood we wandered,  
 (We were lovers then, you know):  
     The daffodils were blowing,  
     And this same stream was flowing,  
     And the sky like that was glowing—  
 Ah! a dozen years or so!  
 Twelve years of best joy squandered!

It seems so short a while  
 Since we stood here together,  
 (You remember yonder stile?)  
     When we trusted stream and flowers  
     With those whispered words of ours—  
 Ah! it seems but twelve short hours  
 Since I waited for your smile  
 In just the same Spring weather!

Twelve years! How soon they pass!  
 Shall twelve more still be wasted?  
 Still the dead leaves strew the grass?  
     Or will you smile for token?  
     Say again those sweet words spoken?  
     Shall we lift our cup half-broken?  
 Shall the nectar in love's glass  
 We've left so long be tasted?

## The Kiss

'Twas but last night, beneath the trellised vine,  
You gave me, dear, that pleading, passionate kiss  
Which seemed to me, and still seems, half divine;  
And so it must be, being no narrow bliss  
Which thrives on that food while it starves on this;  
And therefore, dear, when half an hour ago  
I saw you kissing John as you'd kissed me,  
I felt no wrong, but merely murmured—"Lo,  
'Tis the same woman, and the same vine-tree,  
And the same kiss she lent me—all, in fine,  
Saving John's lips, as 'twas last night." And so  
I find no fitting reason to repine—  
Nay, dear, methinks I've wit enough to see  
How rich your love is, and how poor is mine.

## Daffodils

O PALE, proud daffodils,  
 I love you best of all the flowers that bloom  
     In meadow or by stream,  
     For thoughts of you recall  
 No Autumn sadness and no Winter gloom,  
     But joys of Spring that brimful seem  
     Of laughter as a young child's dream,  
     Rich sights and scents that never pall,  
 And sweetest sounds that softly rise or fall  
     From birds and boughs and rills.

O pale, proud daffodils,  
 I love to watch you when the sunshine plays  
     With your soft green and gold,  
     And the warm western breeze  
 Kisses your bending blossoms as it strays.  
     You are a joy in wood or wold  
     That never with our age grows old ;  
     Yet do you most my spirit please  
 When you half hide among the woodland trees,  
     Like gold the glad Spring spills.

O pale, proud daffodils,  
 You are the fairies of this quiet wood,  
 And when the moon is bright,  
 And when the warm winds blow,  
 Methinks you catch the merry elfin mood,  
 And dance through all the witching night,  
 Tripping between the fern-fronds light,  
 While your pale shades of amber show  
 Like its own gold beneath the moonlight's glow  
 That falls on wood and hills.

O pale, proud daffodils,  
 At such a time 'tis my delight to bring  
 The maiden I best love  
 Into your fairy dell,  
 To share with you the joyance of the Spring.  
 Then, while the moonbeams dance above,  
 And your pale blossoms star the grove,  
 Inspired love its tale can tell,  
 For Spring, which stirs all creatures with its spell,  
 The breast of love deep fills.

## The Shell

HAVE you forgot what I remember well,  
That day of summer when the sea and land  
Smiled with a wedding smile, and from the sand  
You gathered up this little pearl-pink shell,  
And told me if I listened it would tell,  
As even now it does on this far strand,  
Your murmured vows mingled with ocean's swell ?  
Yea, as I press it to my ear, the spell  
Is there—the cadence of your sweet command  
Falls like a wave upon a distant shore.  
Sometimes it gladdens like a marriage bell,  
And sometimes, since I shall not see you more,  
It rings with mournful music like a knell ;  
And sometimes I can hear the storm-winds roar.

## Bluebells

O BLUEBELLS, sing to me a little song  
 Of joy and Spring's sweet madness.  
 Choose your own tune, and your own theme :  
 I care not what they be, so long  
 As they are free from sadness ;  
 And I will listen by this stream,  
 And while I listen dream  
 Of fairy forms that thread and throng  
 The sunny mazes of this wood ;  
 And I will dream until  
 My soul your magic music fill,  
 And all you sing to me is understood,  
 And I have learned your gladness.

O bluebells, half the green of this fair glade  
 Is hidden by your flowers,  
 As though you'd borrowed from the sky  
 A patch of its own perfect shade,  
 The blue of heaven's own bowers.  
 Sing to me while I lingering lie  
 Where the slow stream slips by ;  
 And let the music you have made  
 Be borne upon the soft Spring breeze

Till I have caught the sound  
That only here is to be found,  
The sweet glad secret of the birds and trees  
Sung to Spring's golden hours.

And when, O bluebells, I have learned to sing  
Your song, to dance your measure ;  
When I can catch your half-heard spell,  
Stay the swift spirit of the Spring,  
And touch its filmy treasure ;  
Then may I try to sing as well,  
And your sweet praises tell  
To other hearts who long to bring  
Their griefs where grief a while may sleep,  
Teaching them to forget  
In dreams of joy the fears that fret ;  
Even as I learned, when I came here to weep,  
To share your simple pleasure.

## Hope

LET us not, dearest, mourn our years as vain  
Because love's bright uprising now doth set  
In darkness—let not love's sweet failure fret  
Our waking thoughts, nor dreams of present pain  
Trouble our sleep; but let remembrance reign  
Like a calm moon that clears a cloudy sky.  
Hope like a lingering sunset cheers the night:  
Still there's a streak of glory on the years,  
That scarce shall fade before the dawn appears,  
Bringing another sunrise and new light.  
Let us not all our former draughts forget  
Because the stream we drank from now is dry.  
Yet may the clouded heavens have something bright  
To make a rainbow of our saddest tears.

## Good-Night

GOOD-NIGHT ! But ere you leave me breathe one kiss  
     Upon my fevered brow.  
 It is a little gift you shall not miss ;  
     And it will sweeten sleep,  
     And linger till the light  
     Of morning through my lattice creep.  
 Ah ! my loved guardian, you may leave me now.—  
     Good-night ! Good-night ! Good-night !

Good-night ! The honeyed perfume of the may  
     Comes with the soft night-breeze :  
 The rustling leaves sound merry and at play :  
     The sleepy hills and woods  
     Are full of Spring's delight :  
     No note of pain or sorrow broods  
 Where the sweet Night-bird sings in yonder trees.—  
     Good-night ! Good-night ! Good-night !

Good-night ! But let me see the yellow moon  
     Rise o'er yon dreamy hill ;  
 And let me hear the Nightingale's sweet tune,  
     The tune that tells of love ;

And I would watch the flight  
Of the blithe bats that wheel above ;  
And I would dream of yonder murmuring rill.—  
Good-night ! Good-night ! Good-night !

Good-night ! But first your soft hand lay in mine,  
And whisper of love's spell,  
And let your bright eyes sparkle with love's wine.  
Dear friend, I shall not dream  
Of pleasant sound or sight  
Apart from you. You are my theme  
Waking and sleeping, my soul's vesper-bell.—  
Good-night ! Good-night ! Good-night !

## Darkness

THE misty ages gather round and round :  
Deeper the silence grows, darker the night :  
From the thick clouds the soul calls out for light :  
Its feeble clamour beats against its bound,  
And scarce an echo answers back the sound.  
Yet still the stars shine on, time takes its flight,  
Earth shifts her seat, the sun stirs sea and sky,  
And moving things are born, and breathe, and die.  
They come, and take their turn of joy and pain,  
Laughing and weeping, and go back again ;  
And only man would ask the " whence " and " why,"  
And sometimes thinks he hears a voice explain.  
Beating his wings, he seeks the truth or lie  
Of his own hopes, wondering how much is vain.

## Light

As when the sun on Chaos broke, and light  
 Cheered the dark chasms, and cleared the wreck of  
 life,

And peace upon the troubled sea of strife  
 Fell like the dawn-glow—so the World's long night  
 Heaven's glory pierced, and put Hell's gloom to flight.

This was the sun whose brightness filled all space :  
 Not those pale stars at fitful times that beamed  
 From some far corner of God's vault, and gleamed  
 Meteor-like, phantasmal, lighting half the face  
 Of sleeping man, trouble-stirred while he dreamed.

This was the Sun of Suns promised our race,  
 The Day-Star that with gathering glory bright,  
 And healing in its beams, should rise and chase  
 Hell's clouds, and make the world God's dwelling-  
 place.

## Night-Song

I RUSH into the storm-tossed night :  
I shout—"O best-loved, where art thou ?"  
The storm-wind mocks at my affright :  
I only hear a creaking bough.

A creaking bough is all I hear,  
Save the mad wind and ghostly rain.  
In every shadow lurks a fear,  
In shrouds of death I see thee lain.

And all night long the Forest keeps  
Its secret, and my heart beats on ;  
Till o'er the storm a silence creeps,  
Till darkness laughs, and half is gone.

## Love Sonnets

### I.

OF every wound 'tis idle to complain,  
 And every hurt finds not an easy cure.  
 Of sweet and bitter nothing are we sure,  
 And every pleasure has its kindred pain.  
 'Tis our poor province patient to endure,  
 With all content where nothing is in vain.  
 Mixed in one cup, strangely run foul and fair.  
 In every bud is a devourer lain,  
 Bred with the sweetness it was born to share.  
 Ruling one brow, Hope smiles and frowns Despair :  
 On the same throne Life and Death equal reign :  
 Darkness and Light divide the realm of air.  
 There is no robe without its spot of stain :  
 No pleasant joy but has its bitter bane.

## II.

So quickly Pleasure smiles and it is gone,  
Love's little heyday of illusion brief !  
A falling star that but a moment shone,  
One ray of sunshine in a waste of grief !  
So thou, my passing glory—like a leaf  
That waves above the forest, and anon  
Is gathered by the wind ! The yellow sheaf  
That makes the dead ground smile—then all alone  
Leaves it the sadder for the gift ! O thief,  
Devil or angel, what hast thou yet more  
To give or take worth keeping ? What relief  
For the heart's hunger to grow glad upon ?—  
Save my lost star smile from the Heavenly shore,  
And my wrecked soul to its true course restore !

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## III.

IN quiet quest my love doth walk apart,  
As in a cloister one that hath forsworn  
The weighty world, and with a heavy heart  
Looks on the way his weary feet have worn  
With even eye of sorrow and of scorn.  
No pious pilgrim doth his vigil keep  
With keener ken, watching the day depart,  
And midnight merge into the pale-flecked morn,  
And one by one the solemn stars slow borne  
Past the dark hill-tops. Like the motionless Deep  
When not a breath stirs, lies the world asleep,  
And not a sound doth from its silence start:  
Only Love closer to thy shrine would creep—  
Where thou hast been, to worship and to weep.

## IV.

O'ER many a mossy hill we wandered free,  
Thy hand in mine, and thy fair ringlets flying,  
Woody by warm zephyrs from the western sea,  
That whispered of thy beauty, softly sighing.  
So, in sweet rivalry of pleasure vying,  
Blithely we raced above the golden plain ;  
And when for joy we shouted, in wild glee,  
The wakeful Echo, half forgetting pain,  
Joined in our mirth, the merry sound replying,  
And we, for answer, laughed to her again.—  
So all the light-winged hours we made to flee ;  
Till the spent Day, on Evening's bosom dying,  
Breathed his bright ending o'er the western main,  
And brooding Darkness smiled once more to reign.

## V.

I LEFT thee smiling, joyous as the morn

When Day's first beams upon the Earth are shed :

I find thee silent, tearful, and forlorn,

Thy beauty faded, and thy laughter fled—

Life's sunshine lost, Death's shadow in its stead.

Alas! what envious blight hath spoiled thy bloom?

What wanton worm hath on thy fragrance fed?

The sunrise saw thy blossom brightly spread:

Now 'tis but noon, and the rough winds have worn

Its freshness—low it hangs its withered head;

And Nature goes her way with kindly scorn,

Having no time to count her sick or dead.

A blossom droops at sunset to its doom,

At dawn another buddeth in its room.

## VI.

WHO from a dream of joy did ever waken  
 To find the glory that he worshipped fade?  
 Who from a glimpse of Heaven, a moment strayed,  
 Sees but the Earth, of that fair gleam forsaken?  
 Who hath a shadow for a substance taken?  
 Or grasped a presence that but proved a shade?  
 Who hath a hope in brightest colours rayed,  
 That the next instant darkness hath o'ertaken?  
 Who in the burning waste, his thirst to slaken,  
 Runs to the fount that to his fancy played?  
 Who hath a cup the God of Wine might borrow,  
 Whose sweet to bitter suddenly is shaken?—  
 'Tis ever so with mortal joy and sorrow:  
 To-day 'tis bright, that is all dark to-morrow.

## VII.

ALONE in cloistered thoughts my love would dwell,  
To muse on ghostly joys that long have fled.  
Slowly as saints are wont their beads to tell,  
Even one by one, would I count up my dead,  
While all the storied pavement marks my tread.  
In pillared solitude and vaulted gloom  
Grief's blotted page I soonest learn to spell,  
And the faint music stored in Memory's shell  
Falls clearest in the stillness of the tomb.  
Breathless I listen to thy passing-bell  
That swings in storm above, and through the spread  
Of clustered column hear thy requiem swell;  
Yea, and I watch that covered thing of doom  
Creep dimly on—darker than shades of hell.

## VIII.

OF form or feature I remember not :  
Whether Fame judged thee to be foul or fair ;  
If with a blemish, or without a blot ;  
Lofty or low of stature, full or spare ;  
Or black or brown the colour of thy hair ;  
Or what thy mind was—these are all forgot :  
That I have loved thee only is my care.  
Love is not busy to divine its fire :  
Being wounded, Passion recks not of the shot.  
Love's notes fall sweetly from the plainest lyre :  
The ravished listener waits not on the air.  
I know I love thee—nothing else I wot.  
Thou hast a body which is my desire—  
For thy soul's sake, which doth its worth inspire.

## IX.

THY feet, like pretty wantons, show and shun,  
Hiding and peeping, like the laughing fruit  
When through the leaves a breeze lets in the sun.  
As timid and as playful as a nun,

Veiled, for her beauty, in a sober suit,  
More dainty seeming for the saintly dun.

Nimble as Orpheus' fingers on his lute,  
Or wingèd fairies that on moonbeams run,  
Or Cupid tripping on a cloud to shoot  
His busy shaft of thy bright glances spun.

Thy moving graces gladdened Earth doth greet,  
Deeming a fresh creation hath begun ;

As when Eve walked in Paradise, flowers sweet  
Sprung from the ground to kiss her passing feet.

## X.

ALL sweetness that of pleasant sound is born  
A tribute to thy winning voice would pay :—  
The breezy rapture of the Lark's first lay,  
When his free matin to the risen Morn,  
Soaring, he sings, and every silvered Thorn  
Trembles with waking songsters warbling gay ;  
Or the wild witching, when the moonbeams play  
Through the hushed woodland, of the Night-bird's song,  
Like Love, half glad—like Passion, half forlorn,  
Stirring the heart for some strange want to long ;  
Or the stream's music, rippling its bright way ;  
Or laughter of the leaves when Elfin throng ;  
Or Angels' whispers, that so briefly stay—  
Heard in a dream, forgotten with the day.

## XI.

EACH of thine ears seems like a little shell,  
Whose pearly pink peeps from the golden sand;  
And lightly stirred by the waves' lingering swell,  
Whispering wild wonders from a far-off strand,  
Music or magic of the sea or land.

Or tipped with bloom-tint from the pale heath-bèll,  
When by faint zephyrs languishingly fanned,  
That sigh the soul out of their sweet desire.

Or stream-lapped lily, that doth never tire

Of the mere's music—when the night's at hand,  
Folding the secrets which the lake-nymphs tell.

Or, when the dying Sun doth spend his brand,  
Tinged like a cloud-flake on a sky of fire,  
Carrying the cadence of the Heavenly choir.

## XII.

THY mouth is like a bud whose rosy tips  
     Some dainty bee, trembling at sweets so rare,  
 Robs of their perfumed dew, and deeply sips,  
     Till its cloyed thighs can scarce its plunder bear.  
 Thy laughter is like Ocean's when blue air  
 And beams of light the jewelled waves enchase;  
     And when thou'rt grave, 'tis like the Moon's pale  
         care  
 When a dull cloud her glory would eclipse.  
 Love, lingering long to catch a fleeting grace,  
 Steals the bright smile that quivers on thy lips,  
 Then hides him in the dimples of thy face,  
     Or seeks the golden shelter of thy hair;  
 As from some parted flower a fairy trips,  
 And down into the moony woodland dips.

## XIII.

ALONE I wander, like a banished man  
Within some weary desert doomed to stray,  
That yet in dreamland hath the power to scan  
Of former friendship all the flowery way,  
And half return unto the wept-for day.  
Still past my prison-bounds my soul can fly,  
To dream of love, and of its rainbow span,  
Fashioned of tears, like all Earth's ecstasy.  
Sometimes I ponder on the days of Pan,  
When gods and men had freedom to be gay,  
When lips could laugh, and love could lightly play,  
And pleasure was not fettered by a plan.—  
Then from my dreams I start to see on high  
The lightning strike across the darkening sky.

## XIV.

THOU hast the key and keeping of my heart,  
Thy slave in freedom, that would ne'er be free ;  
And when our Fate commanded us to part,  
I left my service and my soul to thee—  
The rest a wreck cast rudderless to sea !  
For what of phantom pleasure should I spare,  
In sorrow banished, and from thee apart,  
Bankrupt of every sweet that Joy might share,  
If in my prison Joy could visit me ?  
Ay me ! on wings that I could fly to thee,  
And in thy bosom hide my heavy care,  
As in a shrine where no dark dreams might be !  
Then gloom would vanish like a ghost of air,  
And thy fond arms should win me from despair !

## XV.

WHAT thing must I, that I may end my pains?  
What do to shun the company of Sorrow?  
Though half my grief I lose, yet half remains,  
And that is gone to-day returns to-morrow.  
And what of joy should come, though I might  
borrow  
An angel's potion to persuade release,  
And gain the calm that heavenly sleep attains,  
Since from my slumber dreams of thee should cease,  
And that were banished which my soul retains?  
Still would I suffer, and those pains increase,  
If thoughts of love my patient passion gains.  
Better to dwell in Memory's twilight peace,  
Better to rest where misty moonlight reigns,  
Than seek the sunshine of forgetful ease.

## XVI.

SOMETIMES, that thou hast loved me seems enough,  
 And Fate and Fortune bravely I defy :  
 Sometimes, being fashioned of such changeful stuff,  
 Nothing will serve but Sorrow to decry,  
 And fruitless longing for thy loss to die.  
 "O that I had the wings"—'tis thus to-day—  
 "That I might to thy worshipped presence fly!"  
 And then to-morrow—"Better 'tis to stay,  
 Patient to suffer, and endure the rough,  
 Till by thy side contented I may lie."  
 Sometimes I ask the Earth where thou dost stray;  
 And sometimes, conning the blue fathomless sky,  
 Question the stars if thou dost dwell on high;  
 But blessed answer comes not either way.

## XVII.

SINCE Sorrow will be mine, I'll fairly woo it,  
 As 'twere the sweetness I desired to gain.  
 If Joy'd be gone, I will no more pursue it :  
 Whom no one follows only flies in vain,  
 It mocks itself that none will mock again.  
 Let Pleasure prove inconstant, I'll not rue it,  
 But for my comfort worship constant Pain.  
 "Thou art my angel, Grief"—'tis so I'll sue it—  
 "No other god shall in my temple reign."  
 And to Misfortune—smiling welcome to it—  
 "Enter my porch, inhabit my free fane !"  
 Thus will I take a blessing for a curse,  
 Scoring this vantage o'er disdained Disdain—  
 The better gone, content to woo the worse.

## Pharaoh's Appeal after the Tenth Plague

TEN times, O strongest of Gods, hast Thou struck  
     my people and pride,  
 And ten times save one in my madness have I Thy  
     might defied ;  
 Yea, blind to the signs of Thy hand, and deaf to Thy  
     warnings given,  
 I mocked at the storm of Thy wrath, and scorned the  
     sceptre of Heaven ;  
 But he that laughs at the thunder forgetteth the  
     lightning's fire,  
 And lo, O God, Thou hast smitten our hearts in  
     their chief desire !  
 Thou hearest, Who hearest all things, my people's  
     wail for their dead.  
 Grief bends o'er the couch of purple, and broods o'er  
     the poorest bed.  
 Alike in palace and cottage Thou hast doomed our  
     best to die,  
 And in all my realm of Egypt no sound is heard but a  
     cry.  
 And now, O Lord of the Heavens, have mercy  
     because Thou art great,

For the Princes of Earth are dust before the breath of  
Thy hate.

Stern is Thy voice in the storm, the thunder, the  
sheath of Thy sword,

But who can reckon his days in the flaming wind of  
Thy word?

Therefore, O Lord, show us mercy, and pardon Thy  
servant's wrong,

Seeing that my soul repenteth, and seeing Thou art so  
strong.

Ten times save one have I broken my word, and  
laughed at Thy rod,

Because, O God, in my heart I believed not that  
Thou wert God;

But now am I sure and doubt not, I know Thou art  
what Thou art,

And Thy truth shall guide my hand as Thy terror  
governs my heart;

Yea, my promised word shall stand as the stem of the  
straightest palm,

Only still Thou the storm of Thy wrath, and give my  
people calm.

## The Expulsion

WITH slow steps, looking backward, at God's word  
Forth walked they, and that moment learned to weep  
When their loved garden melted like a sleep,  
And their strained eyes saw but the flaming sword  
Pointing the will of their offended Lord.  
From a rank weed close at the feet of Eve,  
Stretching its poisonous tongue, that thing did creep,  
Devil or snake, whose talent to deceive  
Had caused their loss. So passed they, hand in hand,  
Speechless, with faltering feet, and looks of shame,  
Bearing the heavy burden of their blame  
To the dim shadows of an unknown land ;  
Oft looking back, doubtful of God's command—  
Darkness in front—behind, the threatening flame.

## Night

FAIR is the night, and free as fair.  
There is a softness in the air,  
Yet a weird stirring, as of storm—  
The spirit as yet, without the form.  
It is as if some fairy sprite  
Had called her fellows for a flight  
Of frolic—such a fill of fun  
As might be 'twixt the moon and sun.  
The wild west wind with saucy will  
Over the shoulders of the hill  
Tosses the moon-clouds, like the tresses  
Of some fair maid a youth caresses,  
Spreading her bright hair through his hands,  
Or twisting it in amber strands.  
The Thorn-trees on the turfey slope  
Like blinded stragglers seem to grope :  
Blacker than night each shaggy mass  
Is shadowed on the moon-stirred grass.  
Below, in phantom distance creeps  
The valley, like the unguessed sweeps  
Of ocean dappled in the dawn,  
When lying level as a lawn.  
Above, the heavens are like a map  
With land and sea that overlap,  
And cloudy continents which ape

Earth's slower change of isle and cape,  
 All in a moment's counterfeit.  
 Scarce heard, Night's muffled pulses beat  
 With measured motion, still and slow  
 As sentries' footfalls on the snow.  
 The world is silent as a cave  
 Covered at flood-time by the wave.  
 Still as a shadow lies the night:  
 No sound stirs, whether fall or flight,  
 Save the vexed wind's uncertain moan,  
 And that strange music of its own,  
 Half instruments, and half a song  
 Soft-chanted by an unseen throng,  
 Which the night whispers to quick ears.  
 Deep-set in space one star appears,  
 An island jewelled in a lake  
 Of the blue sky, whose white clouds make  
 Coast-line and cliff, and surf as well  
 To mark the tossed waves' changing swell.  
 Amid the mirky plain below  
 A light beams like a beacon's glow;  
 Which sets one wondering if it be  
 A flambeau-flash of revelry,  
 Or a lone flame to fend the dead,  
 Or lamp to lead some studious head  
 Through Learning's leaves; but while we doubt  
 What use the thing has, it is out,  
 And in good season, sooth, for soon  
 A wanness dims the waning moon,  
 And the first streak of crimson fills  
 The cleft between the eastern hills.

## Spring and Autumn

YOUTH is the Autumn's priest, and loves to pray  
In her cool temple—from her cloistered shade  
To watch her sunset glory flame and fade,  
To hear her anthems swell and die away.  
Her worshipped splendour is but for a day.  
Across the Winter's snow a smiling maid  
Beckons—a new Dawn flushes all the East.  
Age serves Spring's altar, proselyte and priest,  
Her incense burns, and leaps before her shrine,  
Brings her fresh garlands, spills her strong new wine,  
And leads the voices that her praises sing.  
Age joins in jocund dances with the Spring,  
Who, laughing, leads him where her sunbeams shine,  
Fooling him to forget the Winter's sting.

## The Brook

THROUGH field and wood the brook flows on—  
My brook, where once in brighter days  
I weaved Spring-garlands, and sang lays  
Of love now gone.

Then you, lost love, were by my side,  
To hope my hope, and dream my dream,  
And wonder when our little stream  
Would join its tide.

Now you are gone, and soon must yield  
My shadows to the setting sun;  
But still our little brook will run  
Through wood and field.

## The Coward

SUCH dreams of daring stir my mind and heart  
I chafe for deeds and danger—yea, I long  
To shake the sky, and play a hero's part;  
Yet my hand falters at a common wrong,  
And all my fury ends but in a song;  
While, like a conscious knave found out, I start,  
And tremble half with fear, and half with shame.  
Am I a coward? Has the plague a name?  
Lies the fault with the heart, or nerves, or mind?  
Or with that nameless part of us named will?  
Is some mad mingling of the blood to blame?  
I fly not danger—nay, I fan its flame;  
But when the time to strike comes—lo, I find  
That my hand stirs not, and my heart stands still.

## The Golden Wedding

FIFTY years ago, you say?  
 Lord! it seems but yesterday  
 When we walked up the little aisle,  
 And felt as if we'd tramped a mile,  
 Through all the gaping village folk  
 Who'd come to stare at us and joke,  
 Which wasn't pleasant for a pair  
 Who had *our* business to do there!  
 You only blushed, but I looked silly—  
 As foolish as if, nilly-willy,  
 Some chap had shoved me into church,  
 And sudden left me in the lurch.  
 And as for minding what was said,  
 I was so tumbled in the head,  
 When Parson whispered if I'd got  
 The bit of gold that keeps the knot,  
 I jerked my hand nigh out o' socket  
 With plumping it into my pocket,  
 And fetched up, fishing for the ring,  
 Two keys, an old pipe, and some string,  
 And I don't know what trash beside;  
 And Parson was so sorely tried  
 With straining to look grave and sober,  
 His face turned red as crimson clover.

Then, by and by, when we went out,  
 Lord! how the folks did cheer and shout!  
 And as we passed them through the wicket,  
 The rice rained fast as they could flick it,  
 And we bobbed heads, and laughed, and blushed,  
 And then half tumbled and half rushed  
 Into Joe Jordan's one-horse shay  
 He'd lent us from the "Load o' Hay."—  
 Lord! it seems but yesterday!  
 Then, you remember—don't you?—where,  
 For quiet and for change of air,  
 Joe drove us? 'Twasn't over seas,  
 But folk in love aren't hard to please,  
 And when a journey's paved with smiles  
 We don't take much count of the miles.  
 Then I can hear—can't you?—the crack  
 Of Joe's whip on the horse's back;  
 And that next moment comes to mind  
 When we had left the crowd behind,  
 And all the shouting girls and boys—  
 We were so blithe to miss the noise,  
 The world seemed ours for that one minute,  
 And we the only couple in it.  
 And when, for fear you might take cold,  
 My arms about you I did fold,  
 And pressed you tight enough to smother,  
 And said one soft thing and another,  
 You looked so pretty and so shy,  
 My heart went faster than Joe's fly,  
 And yours went—well, it didn't crawl,  
 As I could feel beneath your shawl;

And that was fifty years ago !  
 Lord ! to think how time does go !  
 Fifty years ! Why, fifty years  
 Should be well-notched with smiles and tears,  
 And yet *our* fifty somehow seem  
 No further off than last night's dream !  
 For I can see that day as plain  
 As if 'twere just come back again—  
 The little church, and folks that cried  
 " God bless her ! " when they saw the bride,  
 And your sweet face, with blushes on it,  
 Half-peeping from your bridal bonnet.  
 Aye, 'twas a sweet face ! but I vow  
 To me 'tis just as pretty now.  
 What's that you say ? My nonsense ?—Well,  
 Let's see it, and plain truth I'll tell.  
 Come, dame, let's see your face—quite near—  
 If aught it's changed in fifty year.  
 Don't laugh—why, that's the old laugh—same  
 As used to set my heart aflame  
 When we first courted ! Lord ! I'll swear  
 I don't see one day's thumb-mark there !  
 'Tis wrinkled, eh ? So says your glass ?  
 Well, may be I'm a blind old ass,  
 And God be praised ! for best be blind  
 Than see what we don't want to find,  
 And I've stared hard, but nought I've seen  
 That's not just what it's always been—  
 The dearest, daintiest, kindest face  
 That ever brightened man or place !  
 And as for wrinkles—we can't flee 'em,

And as for yours, dear—I don't see 'em;  
 And as for age—as Parson said  
 The very day when we were wed—  
 Says he—"Whate'er be out of sight,  
 Youth mostly has the surface bright,  
 And polished fair; but growing old  
 Proves if the metal's gilt or gold,  
 For gold shows brighter for time's scratches,  
 While gilt rubs off in ugly patches;  
 And fine looks, like fine clothes, wear out,  
 But true love doesn't change a clout."  
 That's Parson's speech, and gospel true  
 I think it is of us—don't you?  
 For I'll be bound twice fifty year  
 Would only make us two more dear.  
 So let's thank God for our long life,  
 And our long love, too!—Come, old wife!  
 Here's to thee with a hearty buss,  
 And fifty more!—Nay, what's the fuss?  
 'Tis your best cap, you say, I'm crushing?—  
 Why, dame, I'm blest if you aren't blushing!

## Strife

LET Good and Evil wage their doubtful fight

O'er my scarred body—let them wound it still,  
While my soul smiles and watches from its height,  
Superior that it keeps its key—my will.

Fall their worst rage, their storm-winds shall not fill  
My close-furled sails, nor their waves' maddest might  
Snap my strong ropes, or drag my anchors tight.

So wrestle Life and Death, Darkness and Day;  
While Nature, reckless of the wrong or right,  
Careless who conquers, hardly heeds the fray.  
The thunder's threats, the storms that blast or blight,  
The stars that shatter in the shock of flight—

These no more move her than a mountain rill  
Glad with the glory of the morning light.

## The Primrose

PALE Primrose dwelling by the stream  
 Where you have lived so long,  
 If I could put the half I dream  
 Of you into a song,  
 I still should find a tempting theme,  
 Filled with a fairy throng.

Your leaves and flowers that freshly spring;  
 In Winter are unseen :  
 So may my love arise and bring  
 The joys that once have been.  
 At least, I'll gather hope and sing;  
 And keep remembrance green.

Pale Primrose, I would beg one bloom,<sup>!</sup>  
 For medicine to my mind;  
 To show me how, when filled with gloom,  
 Your simple joys to find;  
 To give my thoughts a little room  
 For something sweet and kind.

## Night

THE sunset fades into a common glow :  
A deeper shadow all the valley fills :  
The trees are ghostlier in the fields below :  
The river runs more darkly through the hills :  
Only the Night-bird's voice the coppice thrills,  
Stirring the very leaves into a sense.  
A witching stillness holds the breath of things.  
Earth has put on her garb of reverence,  
As when a nun within a cloister sings  
To mourn a passing soul before it wings.  
Silent as dew now falls the straight-winged Night.  
Clear overhead (God's still imaginings),  
Shining like Hope, through very darkness bright,  
Star follows star, till heaven is all alight.

## Wine Song

I LOOK on thee, and cannot tell  
Whether thine eyes are black or blue :  
I drink to thee, but know not well  
What the wine's taste is, nor its hue :  
I only know 'tis kingly wine,  
And that thy beauty is divine.

Enough thy presence fills my sight,  
I want not, dear, to name my bliss :  
Thy beauty is for love's delight,  
But not for love's analysis :  
So I forget to taste the wine,  
And only drink my dreams divine.

The spell is broken, for my sighs  
Tell thee, beloved, of my desire :  
Thou, too, dost break it, since thine eyes  
Are kindled with an answering fire ;  
And so, at last, we drink the wine,  
And pledge our hearts to joy divine.

## The Three Spirits

ART thou an angel, Death, or but a devil?  
Is thy dark robe a bridal-dress or shroud?  
Hast thou a smile beneath thy frowns, O Evil?  
Shines there a star behind thy sable cloud?  
Tell us, O Pain, if from thy chorus loud,  
Through its sharp discord, sweeter music floats?  
Tell us—all three—if ye sound other notes  
Scarce heard by us, yet guessed at by our tears,  
And faintly whispered to our hopes and fears,  
Even through our prayers and laughter, rant and revel?  
If ye be Heavenly spirits, inform our ears  
Of Heavenly truths. Scorn not our Earth-bound level,  
But from your starry shrines, your cloud-kept spheres,  
Stoop, and say what is hidden by the years.

## Psalm XLII.

LIKE as the spent hart yearneth  
For water-brooks, so turneth  
My soul, O God, to Thee.  
My soul to God aspireth,  
The living God desireth,  
Athirst with Him to be.

My tears are ever flowing,  
While, nought but scorn bestowing,  
They mock me that pass by.  
“Where is thy promised measure?  
Thy boasted trust and treasure?  
Where is thy God?” they cry.

When of these things I ponder,  
My soul I pour in wonder;  
For with the joyous throng,  
In Thine own house, I offered  
Glad sacrifice, and proffered  
Incense of prayer and song.

My soul, why art thou sinking?  
Why thus so darkly shrinking?  
In God be still thy trust.

Yea, still, my God, I'll praise Thee,  
 For Thou wilt yet upraise me,  
 And lift me from the dust.

O God, my soul is sunken,  
 As one that hath deep drunken  
 The wine from sorrow's cup :  
 Wherefore from Jordan's glory  
 I'll look, from Hermon hoary  
 My soul to Thee lift up.

Thy billows o'er me thundered,  
 The answering deeps have sundered  
 My soul with fear of strife ;  
 Yet day and night Thy kindness  
 Will shine upon my blindness,  
 And lead me back to life.

To God, my Rock, I'll turn me,  
 And say—" Why dost Thou spurn me ?  
 When wilt Thou stay Thy rod ? "  
 Daily my foes beset me,  
 Their tongues like sharp swords fret me,  
 Saying—" Where is thy God ? "

My soul, why art thou sinking ?  
 Why thus so darkly shrinking ?  
 In God be still thy trust.  
 Yea, still, my God, I'll praise Thee,  
 For Thou wilt yet upraise me,  
 And lift me from the dust.

## The Footsteps of Sorrow

SORROW hath seasons even like the years.

First, when our grief is freshest, comes the Spring,  
All flushed with showers and flood of filling tears—

Clouds on the blue, that break and moistures fling.

And then the Summer, like a full-crowned King,  
Ruling an empire with an open hand,

And busy eye that noteth every thing.

Autumn the next, with fruitage of ripe ears,

And footsteps pressing on the furrowed sand,

And sound of waves upon a distant strand.

Lastly the Winter, waiting by the shore,

Like an old grief grown patient with desire ;

Whose eye hath leisure for the world no more,

Fixed as a saint that hears the Heavenly Choir.

## Elleen

YOU'RE such a fanciful beauty, Elleen,  
 And your neat little head is so full of sweet lies,  
 That there's no guessing  
 From your caressing  
 Whether a curse is in store or a blessing :  
 Sure, never a weather-glass, nor the blue skies,  
 Ever proved so uncertain a guide as your eyes !

Spring is more constant than you are, Elleen.  
 Just like an angel one moment you'll smile,  
 Till there's no measure  
 Would hold the pleasure  
 Of what we fools deem a heavenly treasure :  
 Then, when our hearts are soft with your guile,  
 Like a sweet little fiend you'll frown for a while !

Yet fickle or false I like you, Elleen ;  
 For though you may make a man mad with your  
     ways,  
 You are so witty,  
 As well as pretty,  
 One never feels dull with you. Faith, 'tis a pity  
 You're only a bubble with beautiful rays,  
 That breaks on the stream with whose bosom it  
     plays !

## Napoleon in Exile

EARTH's greatest actor on Earth's smallest stage,  
He stands amid the ashes of his fires,  
And dreams of crowns to conquer, wars to wage,  
Of realms he ruled and still to rule aspires.  
No wing-bruised eagle beating at its wires,  
No lion chafing in its close-barred cage,  
Knows wearier durance of its wild desires,  
Or frets its heart out with a fiercer rage.  
From the world's book of deeds no weightier page  
Was ever torn—none stained by blood and tears  
Like this one—none so fingered o'er by fate.  
Even in his narrow prison he is great.  
The voice of triumph trembles yet with fears.  
The world still bends before his broken state.

## A Letter

DEAR Jenny, do you still remember  
This little wood, and that September  
When you and I, a plighted pair,  
With hearts as light as April air,  
Wandered and whispered, and made vows  
Heard only by the birds and boughs?  
We were as merry as two elves  
That dance in moonlight by themselves;  
Blithe as two ears of corn together,  
That nod and laugh in Summer weather;  
In short, we were a pair of lovers,  
As free of flight as two young plovers,  
Or the first swallows when they wing  
Wild with the breezy warmth of Spring.  
But joys change colour like the moon,  
And clearest hopes cloud over soon,  
And love is like the shifting sea  
That cannot with itself agree.  
So we two quarrelled—what about  
I hardly know, but we fell out,  
And parted, and went each our way;  
And that's ten years ago to-day.  
Ten years! how great a sum it seems,  
Yet but a fraction of our dreams!

.

Dear Jenny, shall ten years ago  
For want of wit to twenty grow?  
Or may we not, if we've a mind,  
A way to mend our matter find?  
This old wood weaves a kindly spell,  
And voices sound which seem to tell  
That all's not wasted by the years.  
One thought, at least, my spirit cheers—  
That old wounds, like old walls, have mosses  
To cover o'er Time's cracks and crosses,  
And flowers spring strangely from the weeds  
Of our mishaps or our misdeeds,  
As violets and foxgloves fill  
The patches on a turf-torn hill,  
For seldom is a place so bare  
But something sweet will blossom there,  
And barren hearts, like barren places,  
When Nature prompts oft bloom in graces.  
Therefore, dear Jenny, you and I  
May mend our matter if we try,  
Or find, perhaps, what's even better—  
Not much to mend except this letter.

## Sin

LONG while the Devil hath sown the Heavenly  
ground.

Under the soil of ages sleep the seeds,  
Swelling with dreamless strength, of our misdeeds.  
Loose but the clogging crust, rake the earth round,  
Let freedom for the sun and rain be found—  
Soon the leaves spring to light, the lusty weeds  
Push past the flowers, and lo! full-blossoming Sin  
Rules half God's garden. Once it doth begin  
Its course it checks not. What it spoils 'twill spend.  
To call it rank and noisome will not mend  
Heaven's cause. Its blooms are fair enough to win  
The soul's best sense. Vainly we seek its end.  
'Twere better if its wild growth we could tame  
To Virtue's graft, and give it Virtue's name.

## The Seasons

THE roses in the garden  
Are blooming young and gay:—  
Thy beauty, love, is budding  
As sweet and fresh as they.

The roses' bloom is fading;  
The frost upon them lies:—  
As wan, love, is thy beauty,  
Like the light of snowy skies.

The roses all are scattered,  
Buried is every bloom:—  
Ah! love, thy beauty also  
Lies hidden in the tomb!

## Golgotha

WHITE lay the city in the gloom below,  
Phantom-like in the darkness. The noontide sky,  
Sunless and starless, blacker seemed to grow.  
Fear held the world, which had no heart to cry,  
But breathless waited while its Lord should die.  
No light th' affrighted earth and heavens could show,  
Save where God's glory crowned the dying Christ.  
Then shook the world, graves gaped, from hell souls fled,  
Hearts stopped for dread of Earth's most awful tryst,  
And Judah's priests forgot to mock and nod  
At Him they scorned—nay, trembling, with bowed  
head,  
And whispered doubt, in fear to stay or fly,  
Questioned—"Whose blood is this that we have shed?  
Can it be Christ? Is it the Son of God?"

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## To the Lark

BLEST bird! the spring of thy contentment show.

Is it thou art to Sorrow's presence blind?  
 Or, being of Heaven, thy music cannot cloy?  
 Tell it to us who after solace grope;  
 Or rather tell it not, but sing again,  
 Till thy blithe notes our clouds of sadness move.

Thy art is not for solving—I but know  
 Thou'rt more to me than any of thy kind:  
 No other songster hath such speech of hope  
 That e'er is heard on mountain or in grove.

The Nightingale sings but of earthly joy,  
 His sweetest lays are only of his love;  
 But thou hast nothing of this world's alloy,  
 Thou tellest of the things that are above.

O Lark, so joyous is thy simple strain,  
 Could we but half thy music's magic prove,  
 The secret of thy untaught rapture find,  
 'Twere worth our bearing with all present pain!

We idly guess: our sadness ne'er divined  
 Thy perfect freedom fettered by no chain.  
 Sing on, thou marvel to our sober mind!  
 And, singing, learn thy music is not vain,  
 Since it doth charm from us some thoughts of woe.

Whate'er we suffer in our prison here,  
What sorrow, sickness, madness, or despair,  
Thou seem'st so blithe in thy blue realm of air,  
And such full melody doth from thee flow—

The wonder is that, having climbed so near  
Heaven's gate, bright songster! thou should'st ever  
care

To visit us again in this dull sphere.

## Memory

Do you remember, dear, that twilight time  
When our warm sun of love began to set,  
And the cold moon of grief did slowly climb  
Above the darkening hills through mist and wet ?  
Ah ! well, 'tis waste of tears to rail or fret.  
Our loss were less if less had been our gain :  
We should not mourn if we had never met.  
Joy has a heavy mortgage on its day,  
And grief's to-morrow claims a double debt,  
And who is wise will hide his wrong and pay.  
Yet, dear, methinks lost joy is not all vain  
While memory has a string whereon to play—  
Nay, if we two were free to choose again,  
Should we not take the joy and bear the pain ?

## In Memory of Jenny Lind,

*Malvern, November 5th, 1887.*

THE woods are silent, for their voice is hushed :  
 No sound doth break, unless from yonder grove  
 The Blackbird pipes a plaintive passing note,  
 To tell his fellows that the chord is stilled  
 Which so long stirred them ; or, in yon blue stretch  
 Beyond our clouds, with slow sad flight a Lark,  
 Making no music, soars his single way,  
 To bear again the gift Earth sighs to find  
 Was only lent her. Silent are the woods,  
 And skies, and fields, and silence better suits  
 Than richest speech—better than choicest strains,  
 For music were but mockery since thy voice  
 Is lost to us—thy voice, whose echo once  
 Thrilled the far spaces, and, thy herald now,  
 Stirs Heaven's gate to open to thy song.

To-day we laid thee in a little plot  
 Of this wide world that used to flatter thee,  
 Yet learned to rate thy simple worth not less  
 Than thy rich graces. With no stranger's hand  
 We laid thee near those hills thy feet so loved,  
 And that fair nest within their shadowing green  
 Which thou didst choose. The day is sad enough

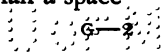
For a sad deed, and the chill Autumn rain  
 Beats on this quiet place where hill and vale,  
 As much as they have will, dispute their claim  
 To guard what Earth yet keepeth. Not far off,  
 When Spring returneth, in the long, sweet watches  
 While Nature holds her vigil—even then  
 The Nightingales, thy sisters, shall trill out  
 Meet requiems ; but none with notes like thine,  
 Rapt Bird, that fleddest o'er thy Northern waves  
 To charm us for a season !

Alas ! how soon

The moments shift, the changes ring, and all  
 That *BEST* we deemed immortal passeth on,  
 While we stand still and stare our wonderment,  
 Each new plain fall a marvel ! Yet thou seem'dst  
 Too fixed a light to drop like common stars :  
 We told our children of thee, and thy fame  
 Filled with the years, till we had almost come  
 To reckon thee immortal as thy song.—  
*Now* the change shocks us, and we have no heart  
 To heed our halting.

In the solemn pause

When thou didst lie within the pillared choir,  
 When the deep organ swelled thy requiem-strain,  
 And the great window like a glorious crown  
 Rose o'er thy resting, it was strange to think  
 (Scarce possible without the help of tears)  
 Of all thou hadst been, all the pomp and pride  
 The world cast o'er thee—now, so small a space



Hiding the sum of all! Didst thou see nought  
Of our poor pageant, the little meed of praise  
We gave to God and thee? Of all the tongues  
Which hymned to Heaven, was thy voice only dumb?  
Or didst thou listen at another shrine,  
And mingle with our echoes those rich tones  
We still remember?—No, it cannot be  
That thou art dumb! No blessèd thing is lost!  
No gift of good can perish with its use!  
Let the Earth take her fill—'tis a small theft,  
And cannot touch the deepest notes in thee;  
For thou still warblest music in God's choir,  
Companion with the clear-tongued Cherubim;  
Where we, who mourn thy presence for a while,  
Humbly have hope to hear thee sing again.

W. H. W.

## Corrie-Na-Creagh, Skye

LIKE a proud spirit, thou sittest in the wrack  
Of thy own ruin, asking not to weep  
Or to be wept for. Chasm on chasm black  
Rise o'er thee, to thy topmost-frowning sweep.  
Hell is not darker, nor Despair more steep.  
Yet there's derision in thy loneliness;  
The mocking of a stern heart's weariness,  
Hope being dead, that joys in its own doom.  
Weird as thyself, strange as by Titans hewn,  
Peak upon peak keep watch above thy tomb.  
Below, amid thy timeless boulders strewn,  
A whitening torrent penetrates thy gloom:  
First like a ghost—then like a spirit free,  
Panting to reach the illimitable sea.

## Wine Song

I LIFT the cup, but ere I drink  
 I pledge this toast to her I think  
     Of all that's fair the fairest:—  
 The sweetest flower that earth can grow,  
 The brightest beam the skies can show,  
 The richest gem that sheds its glow,  
     Her beauty's still the rarest !

I lift the cup—the dainty wine  
 Owns 'tis her eyes that make it shine,  
     And worthy a King's quaffing ;  
 Her lips that give the crimson bright,  
 Her looks that lend the golden light,  
 Her smiles that chase the cellar's night,  
     And set its bubbles laughing !

I lift the cup, I lift it high,  
 And as I drink, and as I sigh,  
     The jealous wine doth quiver ;  
 And I am jealous, too, and swear  
 That other lips shall never share  
 The cup I drink from to my fair,  
     And so the glass I shiver !

## To Ocean

To watch thee, Ocean, from the level shore,  
Coming and leaving, like a common friend  
That has, or has not, liberty to spend—  
This is a wanton's pastime, and no more ;  
But, like a free bird, to be skimming o'er  
Thy billowy bosom—in the wilderness  
Of thy wild waves to feel man's nothingness,  
Yet feel man's Guardian nearer than before—  
To be a part of thee—free to caress  
And be caressed—by turns to laugh and brood,  
And mark thy spirit in each changing mood,  
Seeing in thy mirror our own changefulness—  
Rightly to love thee, and to learn thy lore,  
This, Ocean, is the way thou must be wooed.

## The Rose-Tree

By a Rose-tree stood a maiden :  
With white blossoms was it laden,  
As fair as eye might see.  
Laughing, said she to the fairest—  
“ O Rose, of all the rarest,  
To my lover I'll give thee,  
For joy, and happy token  
Of love ne'er to be broken ;  
For know, O sweet Rose-tree,  
To-morrow he weds me.”

By the Rose-tree on the morrow  
Stood the lover pale with sorrow,  
And eyes all filled with gloom.  
Weeping, said he to the blossom—  
“ Fair Rose, lie on her bosom,  
Go deck her bridal-room.  
Go, Rose, and for a token  
Tell her my heart is broken.  
Tell her love shares her tomb,  
And only there shall bloom !”

## Unrest

No purple lingers near the darkening cleft  
Between the hills where the sun lately shone.  
No colour in my storm-tossed sky is left  
Since, O lost love, thy light of life has gone.  
The sickly moon sits on a shrouded throne,  
Dim, and of all her starry train bereft,  
Like to a realmless queen that broods alone.  
Through the dark trees the restless wind makes  
moan,  
And the wild night is dashed with chilly rain.  
Far off, the shingle on the beach is swept  
By the vexed waves. Now kneel I once again,  
And lay the heavy burden of my pain  
At Nature's feet—aye, and with bitter groan  
Pray her for peace, and pray once more in vain.

## Love's First Touch

WHEN she put her hand in mine  
There was just the slightest quiver  
In her fingers—just a quiver,  
Like a whisper stirring wine,  
Like the trembling of a river  
Beneath the still and shine—  
Just a little nervous shiver  
As her fingers crossed with mine.

That was all, 'twas nothing more ;  
Yet it set my pulses throbbing—  
Set my pulses madly throbbing  
As they never throbbed before ;  
Like the sea when it is sobbing  
Its heart upon the shore,  
Like a wild sea when 'tis sobbing  
For the calm that is no more.

## The Birth of Lust

God driven, man's first parents mournful fled,  
Eve weeping, and both bent with new-born Care.  
Changed were the sunshine and the tranquil air  
Of Eden—now rough winds and clouds instead  
Companioned them, and for their innocence dead  
Knowledge of Evil, and Desire its heir,  
And the child born of both, brooding Despair.  
No longer walked they in the light that shed  
Their Lord's approval, making all things fair.  
Gone was the joy that doth itself contain :  
Left Lust, that only with its death can cease.  
Sighing for Eden's calm, they mourned in vain,  
And with sad spirits summed their loss and gain—  
Hell's passion won—lost them the Heavenly peace.

## A Day-Dream

I WATCHED her shadow in the stream,

A little more ethereal than

Her living presence—like a gleam

Of sunlight melting half in dream—

A half-embodiment, like a span

Of rainbow that doth only seem

The painted figure of a beam.

I could not touch her—could not say

“I love you !” ’Twould have spoiled the spell,

Dissolved my star-flash into day,

Drawn the hue from my asphodel.

So might I not my day-dream tell,

But silent on my flower-bank lay,

And watched her till she stole away,

A fairy fancy down the dell ;

Yet never loved I one so well.

## In Memory of H. H.

'Tis almost heavier than our love can bear  
The thought that all thy worth we knew so well  
Now lies in that poor shift we call a shell—  
Yea, all that seemed most fond, that looked most fair,  
Lips that with kindness stirred, or saintly prayer,  
And laughter like Spring sunshine. Now the spell  
Is broken—the sweet music sounds no more,  
Or sweeter sounds beyond love's listening ears.  
Dear heart ! though thou hast left us on life's shore,  
From thy new home this message comes and cheers  
Our grief—that in the heaven where thou dost dwell  
All that is purest, holiest, most divine,  
All that thy soul most longed for, will be thine ;  
And therefore not for thee we shed sad tears.

## Song

I CAN sing of Joy  
So changeful and so coy,  
That, like the sunny Swallow  
'Twixt Spring and what doth follow,  
Half fills the dull heart's hollow,  
Then leaves it like a toy.

Or I can sing of Sorrow,  
That is so constant to us  
From morn to night 'twill woo us,  
And through our dreams pursue us,  
Nor leave us on the morrow.

## Change

I HAVE your message, like the Cuckoo's song  
 That lasts a little longer than the Spring;  
 And 'tis the old tune, every note, you sing—  
 That we, who swore for life, have loved too long.  
 It would have pricked my pride less if some wrong  
 Of mine had been the feather to your sting;  
 If something I had done, or even thought,  
 Waking or dreaming, had deserved your blame;  
 But no, 'tis only change that you have sought:  
 At least you're honest, and no falsehood frame.  
 Our love was but a child's toy, to be bought  
 And played with till you found some better game.  
 A flower to pluck and smell—then from you fling:  
 A kite to fly a while—then cut the string.

## Love Song

AH ! go not yet!  
 Still for a moment linger in my arms !  
 See, the sun hath not set,  
 Nor have my kisses yielded to thy charms  
 Half of love's debt.

Ah ! do not fly !  
 Let thirsty love drink deeply while it may.  
 Anon may deserts dry  
 Mock us when we would quaff. Therefore, dear, stay  
 This sweet brook by.

Ah ! do not move !  
 'Tis but the Temple's doorway. There are still  
 Dreams of delight to prove.  
 In pillared distance burn the beams that fill  
 The shrine of Love.

Thou shalt not go !  
 Death waits for us, and for the day waits night ;  
 But joy is lord of woe,  
 And while our love is with us, and 'tis light,  
 We'll fear no foe.

## East Wind in Autumn

NATURE is touched as with a witch's wand :  
 The heaven doth hang with clouds as 'twere a blight :  
 A shroudy stillness sits upon the land :  
 Day seems not day, but an unnatural night :  
 Earth hath death's quiet, but without its peace :  
 The pulse of the quick world doth almost cease.  
 A nameless magic dulls the flow of life :  
 The blustering winds have hushed as by command,  
 Blowing nor hot nor cold, nor fair nor rain :  
 The frightened sheep run huddled in a band :  
 The very birds have lost their sweet desire,  
 And flit from bush to bush without a call.  
 The twisted Thorns shrink blasted on the heath :  
 The gorse gleams ruddy as a gipsy's fire :  
 The rust-red fern turns darker on the hills,  
 Which misty loom like giants. Underneath,  
 The breathless landscape crowds beneath a pall :  
 A witching terror curdles the mute rills :  
 The busy air itself doth seem to tire.  
 Life hath no stir save where some smoky wreath  
 Creeps like a ghost uneasy through the plain.  
 Night follows Day as they were hand in hand,  
 A common spell staying their wonted strife.  
 Far in the valley is a twinkling light,  
 Strange in a world where nothing else is bright.

## Serenade

THINE eyes are bright as the stars above  
For whose beams the Night-clouds wrangle,  
And they flash with the magic light of love  
From thy dark hair's trembling tangle.

Thy cheeks are pale as the morning skies  
Ere the dawn awakes them with kisses ;  
And a shadow of sadness on them lies,  
Like the doubt that clouds love's blisses.

The Nightingale sings from yonder Thorn  
The song I would learn to sing thee.—  
O love, awake to the golden morn !  
Awake to the heart I bring thee !

## To the Kneeling Figure in Malvern Priory.

TENANT of stone ! here still thou worshippest,  
 Smiling the prayer that on thy lips has hung  
 While ages travelled. Still thou kneel'st among  
 The quiet tombs. Impassioned joy or spleen  
 Moves not thy face—in part to heaven addressed,  
 In part to the green hills thy feet have clomb.  
 Image of what is past and what shall come !  
 Silent as death, which thou embodiest  
 Far more than life ! Mute sentry, stood between  
 The crumbled mortal and ascended sprite !  
 Hast thou no sense for what is, or has been ?  
 Can nothing break thy sepulchre of rest ?  
 Is there no Dawn to follow thy long Night ?  
 Once thy heart throbbed with human motion keen,  
 Thy folded hands with others warmly pressed,  
 Thy close-sealed lips have sweetly spoke or sung—  
 Now an eternity is not more dumb !  
 The organ peals around thee its deep notes ;  
 But thou art deaf to music's noblest strains.  
 A glory of rich hues about thee floats :  
 Thou car'st not for the splendour of bright panes.  
 What fateful storms and changes hast thou seen !  
 How little dost thou heed the mad world's hum !

Our childhood knew thee as doth now our age—  
Time stirs not thee. Where art thou all this space,  
The part of thee which not in stone remains,  
While wondering centuries roll past thy place?  
They change and cease : the whole world turns a  
page—  
But thou still wear'st that smile upon thy face.

## Love's Secret

I DO love you so  
That I cannot tell  
Whence the charm doth flow  
That pleaseth me so well :  
The more I feel your spell  
The less I seem to know  
What charms me so.

Sometimes I declare  
'Tis in your dark eyes,  
So dark where all is fair ;  
And sometimes I could swear  
That the magic lies  
In your amber hair,  
Which like a shrine of gold  
Its pretty saint doth hold,  
And will but half unfold  
The secret of its care,  
Which never quite is told.

Or 'tis your laughing lips,  
That like a young bud quiver  
Whose honey the bee sips,  
And longs to linger ever ;

Or 'tis your dimpled face,  
 That like a fitful river  
 Takes always a new grace,  
 Keeping the old one never,  
 As sun and cloud change place,  
 To play by turns the giver.

Yet I but waste my sighs,  
 And guessing is despair.  
 It is not lips or eyes,  
 Nor colour of your hair,  
 Nor aught that doth appear—  
 'Tis you yourself I prize,  
 And love's the only spell.

And that's the reason, dear,  
 Why I cannot tell  
 What pleaseth me so well;  
 And I shall never know  
 While I love you so.

## Precepts

CONTENT thyself to-day with to-day's sorrow :  
Press tightly to thy heart thy present joy :  
Fret not to fill the pitcher for to-morrow :  
Pain kept too long will sour, and pleasure cloy :  
Their sight with straining hope and fear destroy.  
A butterfly waits on the sunshine's treasure,  
Nor thinks of shelter till the shadows fall :  
A child spends all his little hour of pleasure,  
Nor stops to listen for his nurse's call.  
Spoil not the meal with doubts as to the measure :  
Bruise not thy feet with kicking at the ball :  
Practise thy wrists to freedom in their fetter.  
Leave not a good thing to pursue a better ;  
Yet seek the best, and make the best of all.

## Serenade

THE Night-wind sighs for love of thee,  
 And I would join its sighing :  
 The Night-bird flies to yonder tree,  
 Where he can still thy minstrel be,  
 Discoursing with sweet melody :—  
     Ah ! me,  
 Love envies so his flying !

O breathe to me a single kiss  
 From out thy bosom's sighing :  
 It cannot be a thing amiss  
 For sweetest flowers to scatter bliss :  
 One joy in all they scarce should miss :—  
     I wis  
 That love for thee is dying !

Thou look'st from yonder chamber's height,  
 No more, O love, denying !  
 Thou lookest with thine eyes of light :  
 The jealous stars have taken flight,  
 And only thou dost help the night :—  
     Too bright  
 For feeble nature's vying !

O joy! Thou leav'st thine airy tower  
To smile upon my sighing!  
Thou bloomest on my breast, sweet flower!  
And Love, who hath immortal power,  
Doth touch with golden wand the hour:—  
O dower  
Eternal and undying!

## Night-Song

THROUGH the dread night I seek  
 An answer from the furies of the storm,  
 But not a voice will speak,  
 Nor doth the lightning blazon any form  
 Lost in the starless vault.  
 There is no sound or sign in stifled space,  
 No sentry that cries "halt"  
 From shadowy walls, the strayed soul's prison-place.  
 'Tis not all dark : the breath  
 Of flaming stars falls sometimes and by fits.  
 'Tis the grey gloom when death  
 Shudders—half seen, half felt—as slow it flits.  
 Now the long brooding breaks :  
 The Storm-fiends spring, each to his clamorous gun :  
 The Earth with thunder shakes :  
 Along the hollow waves the wild winds run,  
 And vex the shingled beach :  
 The mountains mutter in their troubled dreams :  
 The whole world wakes to speech.  
 Anon the tempest tires : the lightning's gleams  
 Flash with a fainter force :  
 Feebler or farther off the thunder rolls :  
 Earth takes again her course,

Worn with the wrath that shook her startled poles.  
 Night and the Earth are tossed  
 As with a passion that is half burnt-out,  
 Like wakened slumber crossed  
 With trembling terrors of a scarce-spent rout.  
 Above, the harried moon  
 Slips like a hound between the hurtling clouds :  
 Then—struggling, straining—soon  
 Is once more tangled in the trailing shrouds.  
 The sky is dashed with rain  
 Blown from the chilly north, whose breath doth freeze.  
 The world as if in pain  
 Moans with the wind that racks the forest trees.  
 The waves upon the shore  
 Beat like a heart that hath an angry grief,  
 Crying—“No more, no more  
 Shall peace be with us ! Never more relief !”  
 And I, who through the night  
 Seek thy lost soul from earth, and sea, and sky,  
 With fear that shrieks for light,  
 Questioning the stars if thou dost live or die—  
 Where shall I find a rope  
 To gather from this wreck thy threatened life ?  
 Where shall I look for hope  
 In all this whirl of winds, this storm of strife ?  
 Across the murky dark  
 My frenzy calls to every distant star.  
 Though never one will hark,  
 I ask the waves that beat beyond the bar.  
 Behind me like a shroud  
 The forest looms, but will not break the spell ;

Nor, though I summon loud,  
 Comes there an echo from the caves of hell.  
 I double in my despair,  
 Now running forwards while I look behind.  
 The blackness of my care  
 Is lost upon the blackness of my mind.  
 I know not where to turn,  
 Nor what page hides thee in the world's great book.  
 Above, below, thy name doth burn  
 In flaming letters each way that I look.  
 O, of my thousand calls  
 Dost thou not, loved one, hear a single shriek ?  
 Surely on Death's thick walls  
 My ceaseless knocking must some mischief wreak ?  
 O, answer me, beloved,  
 From thy far prison ! or, if too remote  
 By mortals to be moved—  
 Nay, if no human ear thy answering note  
 May catch—if thou dost creep  
 In cells too deep for my despair to sink,  
 Or climbest heights too steep  
 Even for my love to breast their giddy brink—  
 Then by the gods I swear  
 To end this tyranny that hath so riven  
 Our souls !—Yea, I will share  
 Thy pain or pleasure, be it of hell or heaven !

## A Love Sonnet

SWEET Linnet, I have lured thee to my net,  
But I will make thee sing in thy constraining.  
Sweet love, do not at thy fond fetters fret :  
I trust to give thee joy of thy restraining.  
The little god doth flap his wings, for feigning  
To be in sorrow, whom his love hath found ;  
But joy doth shine through all his light disdaining :  
'Twere greater grief that he should be unbound.  
Apollo, with sweet music, from the ground  
Draweth all listening creatures to his air :  
The willing slaves are ravished with the sound,  
And sigh to leave captivity so fair.—  
Love is our tyrant, and our bonds hath set  
In prison, that we will not pay his debt.

## Ode to Sorrow

### I.

COME, dark-browed Sorrow, come in angel's form,  
 And teach us things which man,  
 Groping in mists of mortal night,  
 From thee, and only thee, Priestess, can ever learn !  
 Come, and with radiance bright  
 Of Heavenly purpose pierce our failing sight !  
 Teach us of Life and Death, of hopes and fears ;  
 And those twin realms divided like the spheres,  
 Which dimly we discern  
 Parts of the universal plan,  
 Whose chasm still we hope a rainbow bridge will span.  
 But come, and mortal blindness  
 Teach, Goddess, of thy kindness,  
 The truths of Heaven and Earth, seen clearest by thy  
 light !  
 Teach us the secrets of the compassed years,  
 From wrecks that have been teach to stem the storm,  
 To tide the Future teach the Past to turn ;  
 And if thou so incline,  
 Since thou hast grown divine,  
 Teach when thy course unguessed mysterious first  
 began !

## II.

Say, when our World was young,  
 And still its birth unsung;  
 When the loosed Deep beyond his marge did flow,  
 Driving his restless billows to and fro  
     The surging peaks among;  
     And the great ice-hills rolled,  
 Deepening the dales where now the ripening corn,  
     From the rich furrows sprung,  
 Bends to the breezy kisses of the morn;  
     Or where from sheltered fold  
 The fleecy flock doth climb the mountain lawn;  
     And the Lark hails the dawn  
 With song that seems from sadness almost free:—  
     Then did thy spirit brood  
     Above the circling flood,  
 Dreaming of cities yet to be,  
 And stirring peoples yet unborn  
 (Whose very memory is grown old),  
     Under the Frozen Sea?

## III.

Or, when the time was passed  
 That held imprisoned Nature fast;  
 When to a narrower rule rolled back the wandered  
     Deep;  
     And from long ages' sleep  
     The freedom-breathing Earth  
 Trembling with life woke to a second birth,

And the great forms she nursed a second time came  
forth :—

Then didst thou weep to see  
Our world's fatality,  
That not a thing is born but it is born to die?  
Not the huge Mammoth's mighty pulse alone,  
That doth his ending fret;  
Even the frail Violet,  
Shedding its final sweetness ere it lie  
By gathering breezes blown.

#### IV.

When was thy mission given?  
Hadst thou a place in Heaven  
Before our trembling race its fated course began?  
Or wast thou even born  
Upon the very morn  
That, flaming all the sky, rose first upon the man?

#### V.

When man was first by Heaven designed,  
With folded wings above the place  
Where lay the cradle of our race,  
Didst thou then read the Infinite mind?  
And seeing past the years  
The fathomless abyss of tears,  
And all thy sable track that stretched behind,  
Didst thou for pity weep, and seek to hide thy face?  
Or did a radiant beam

From God's own countenance  
 On thy dark features glance,  
 And, like the cloudless glory of a dream,  
 Point the full distance of Almighty grace?

## VI.

Tell us, when first in caves,  
 Or dwellings in the knotted trees,  
 Ere teeming Nature's myriads were his slaves :  
 When with rude weapons he did hardly keep  
 The little kingdom of his daily life ;  
 And how to eat and where to sleep  
 Sang the dull burden of his petty strife :  
 When in the twilight of the human Day  
 He dimly felt his groping way,  
 The humble herald of the fuller time  
 When, lord of every yielding clime,  
 Predestined man should rule, and even the proud waves  
 Acknowledge his decrees :—  
 Then, Priestess, say,  
 Didst thou this strange beginning, our World's child,  
 Follow, and through the strains  
 Of his faint music whisper discord wild,  
 The sad within the gay ?  
 What passions in his bosom bred ?  
 What hopes, and fears, and steps astray ?  
 What hatreds frowned, and friendships smiled ?  
 Had he his loves, his pleasures, and his pains ?  
 And sweet regrets for things unreconciled ?

And did he weep above his dead,  
 And wonder where the meaning lay—  
 The soul of all he knew, and knew no longer, fled ?

## VII.

The glory of the holy dead,  
 Though we resent the grave's demand,  
 So little seems of all that ruled,  
 We cannot doubt the spirit fled :  
 Or else our faith hath but been fooled ;  
 And we have seen a mirrored hand  
 Against the misty background spread,  
 That seemed to point, but only seemed,  
 Across the sea to yonder strand  
 Beyond this beach of shifting sand,  
 And all we held most sure we dreamed.

## VIII.

We close the curtains of our eyes,  
 We know not how, and dream our dream ;  
 And, wakened by a herald beam,  
 That once again our lids should rise  
 Gives us no motion of surprise.  
 Our lids are shut in seeming sleep,  
 Like cradled slumber lightly lain :  
 The dancing sunbeams o'er them leap,  
 And one we loved doth call and weep,  
 But they will never lift again.  
 Where lies the change ? The beating heart

And busy nerves are servants still,  
 And only answer to the will  
 That gave the message first to start.  
 Life on a common road doth creep  
 Until the turning comes to part.  
 The beast we slaughter with the knife,  
 The beetle crawling on the floor,  
 Have this with man, and nothing more:  
 Have nothing till the ripening grain  
     Clears from the chaff through storm and strife;  
     Till soul expands from life to life,  
 And suns unreckoned bring to fruit  
 The germ deep hidden at the root;  
     Till the years sound the call to reap.  
 Then breaks the night: the yielding skies  
 Lift slowly: through the long-closed door  
 Light streams: half joyous, half in pain,  
 Creation sings: the lowest man  
     Hears somewhere in his breast a voice,  
     Feels something that doth bid rejoice,  
 From which his countless creeds began.

## IX.

Our falling tears anoint the face  
 Of him we loved: we lift the hand  
 That holds no remnant of command,  
 Content to lie where it is laid.  
 We speak not, for we are afraid  
 To let the discord of our strain

Vex the strange silence that doth reign  
Beneath the stillness of the sheet.  
We move away, and every place  
Recalls the ever-present dead.  
The world seems but a breathless space,  
And all the life in it decayed.  
Beyond us, in the quiet street,  
We hear the stir of passing feet,  
And idle friends that stop to greet,  
And one that laughs—we think he mocks  
Our grief, the slightest sound so shocks.  
Our steps return where first they led.  
We lift the folded shroud again :  
We can but look, although we dread :  
We feel a pleasure in our pain.  
Like fools of chance, we fret our hearts  
With thousand thoughts of added wrong ;  
And hydra-headed Conscience starts  
At failings of the hand or tongue  
Remembered now, however long  
The smoothing distance of the years—  
The bitter word, the broken vow,  
The blessed deeds undone, that now  
The golden gate is fastened-to  
We'd give our all for grace to do,  
And weep because the wish is vain.  
But thou dost in the doorway stand,  
Still pointing to a far-off strand,  
And smiling to our doubts and fears  
This message with a rainbow spanned—  
That love shines brightest through our tears.

## X.

Thou teachest that the light divine  
     A rainbow makes of mortal tears;  
 And that the all-wise Heavens refine  
     The gathered sorrows of the years.  
 Else who could stay the bitter strife,  
     The brief content, the long despair?  
 The burden of a single life  
     Were heavier than the world could bear.  
 Yea, all our life were but a sleep,  
     And all our sleep a dream of fear,  
 Save for the light that while we weep  
 Our saddest smiles across the storm,  
 And shows a hand that shapes the form,  
     Making our hope a moment clear.

## XI.

It may be all that seems  
     Will prove but half-read dreams;  
 That all we suffer, all we fear,  
 Make but the shadow of the sphere,  
     Which, from a wider ken,  
     Heaven seeth shining clear,  
 Rolling in lessening circles to its beams.  
     The long, deep burden of the Nile,  
     That ceaseless through the ages  
 Hath in dark column to God's throne ascended;  
     Assyria's unwrit pages  
 Of deathless torments, and the bloody streams

That stained her thirsty theatre of sand ;  
 The roll-call strange of human wrong ;  
 Passion and Madness in wild chorus blended,  
 Chanting their charnel-song ;  
 Grief and Despair, whose voices through the gloom  
 Of night and ages long  
 Break the deep silence between God and men ;  
 The sum of Suffering, Tyranny, and Guile  
 Writ on the World's dark scroll with crimsoned pen,  
 Religion in God's name, Lust in its own ;  
 Ambition careless of creation's groan ;  
 And War's proud arrogance,  
 Which to quick strains steps its triumphal dance,  
 Drowning with Glory's drum the death-dirge of the  
 tomb :—  
 In the end of things, perchance,  
 These storm-frowns that a while  
 Swept o'er Time's countenance,  
 Winged with a good invisible to our sight,  
 Too dim to understand—  
 These, from the full years' misty trance  
 Rising, will melt before the smile  
 Of Heaven's unfolding glance,  
 And the long brooding of the mortal night  
 Vanish in glory of unclouded light.

## XII.

O holy Sorrow,  
 Dark-browed Divinity,